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THE ARABIC ORIGINAL OF THE REPORT
OF R. NATHAN HABABLI.

My friend Dr. Alexander Marx, who also has rendered me valuable assistance in the preparation of this article, some time since drew my attention to a fragment now in the library of the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York, belonging to the Genizah Collection of Taylor-Schechter (T-S. Loan 48)¹. The fragment consists of one leaf, paper, size 12 x 7, written on both sides in Hebrew characters. The handwriting is oriental with a turn to cursive. The language is Arabic. A part of the upper margin, unfortunately that containing the beginning of the fragment, is torn off. In several places the MS. has suffered, but the words can still be deciphered. In the upper left-hand corner we still read the words . . . לנעילה וכל היום ² פי', and under it מברך ועד ערב. On the lower margin a few words are still visible, written—like those of the upper margin—in a different, very careless hand. The ink is very much faded. I believe I can discern a group of letters—א.א.מללעהוהבתימה—which I cannot explain, but I feel no certainty even about the letters. At any rate, both these and the words in the upper margin have scarcely anything to do with the text. Upon examining the contents of the MS. I found that it was the Arabic original of a part of the well-known report of R. Nathan Hababli on the Academies in Babylon (Neubauer, *Mediaeval Jewish Chronicles*, II, 78 f., beginning

¹ I am indebted to Professor Schechter for the permission to use the MS.

² Possibly פו'. Apparently an abbreviation for פיוט.

with 78, 20 and ending with 79 penultima, with the words (השיבו שיעשה כדבריו).

Up to this time the Hebrew report has been considered the original. But in my opinion the original character of the Arabic cannot be doubted.

1. It is to be presumed that a native of Bagdad, such as R. Nathan apparently was, used Arabic as the language of his narratives.

2. The Arabic is written in a very pure style, and reads most fluently.

3. A number of additional words and phrases, some of essential character (see later), are to be found in the Arabic, which would be quite impossible in a translation.

4. The Hebrew, though in general fluent and free from the distressing Arabisms which mar the philosophical style of Hebrew translations, betrays in several places the influence of the Arabic. Confining ourselves to the part to which our MS. offers the text, we find so obvious an Arabism as in Neubauer, 79, 8, below, ¹ אדם א'... נודע בנשים¹ (the word is torn off in the MS.) followed by ב. The strange expression ויכתבו לו על ראשם ועמדו ראסתה (79, 19), "they should do homage to him" = (verso, l. 12), is explicable only if we remember that عقد means also "to write."² שלא עמד על מספרם (78, 8, below) = لم يقف على كميتها (recto, l. 3) is better Arabic than Hebrew. The peculiar idiom وقف عليه (79, 5, below) = وقف عليه (verso, 21) is somewhat nearer to the Arabic. Constructions like וכל הנאה שחבא ממנה לפומבדיתא תנוע (78, 6, below) = وכל כרכום שבבבל ממנה (recto, 6), or وجميع قبالة اموالها الى فمبديتا تصل (recto, 2) = وجميع زعفران بغداد منها ياتي (78, 2, paenultima) = (recto, 15), sound rather Arabic than Hebrew. The Biblical expression ארץ מולדתו (79, 10) applied to a town is probably

¹ See about נשים instead of נסי, p. 760, n. 6.

² The עמד in the Edition is most probably a correction. On the MS. containing the Hebrew text (now in the possession of Mr. Epstein, Vienna), cf. Marx in *Zeitschrift für hebräische Bibliographie*, V, 58.

suggested by the Arabic بلد , meaning both a country and a city, a word which our text actually contains (verso, 15).

In view of the first-rate importance of R. Nathan Hababli's text as an historical source I give in the following also an exact English translation of the Arabic text, accompanied by some explanatory remarks, for the benefit of non-Arabists.

It will easily be seen that the Hebrew is not a slavish translation of the Arabic, but rendered a little freely, taking more regard to the spirit of the Hebrew language, and here and there even assuming the character of a paraphrase. The deviations from the Arabic will be noted more fully hereafter. Here I should like to bring into prominence only the most important of them as far as they are of historical value.

Recto: L. 1, היה בנצח confirms the additional words of the MS. (Neubauer, 78, 21). L. 4. The addition הי אלנבאר gives us a most valuable indication of the geographical position of Pumbadita (see p. 756, n. 3). Ibid. The great chronological difficulty of the Hebrew text, ascribing forty years to the presidency of Kohen Zedeq (cf. Grätz³, V, p. 391), is removed by the Arabic, which merely states that the quarrel took place in the fourth year of his presidency. L. 6. According to the Arabic the Exilarch claimed also the right of sending dayyānim to Khorasan on his own authority, whereas this had been done before by the academy of Pumbadita¹. L. 10. The Arabic text has fortunately preserved the names of the two sons of Natira—Sahl and Ishâq. They are of course identical with Sahl and Ishâq of the Natira family mentioned in the Genizah fragment published by Harkavy (in Berliner's *Jubelschrift, hebr. Abteilung*, p. 34 ff.)². The

¹ Cf. Neubauer, 85, 17: among the privileges of the Exilarch is also counted the fact that he was ברשורו דין בניצח אלהם .

² I venture the hypothesis that the author of the Natira fragment is the R. Nathan of our fragment. Both show a most intimate knowledge of the things reported about and a great love for details, and both display

designation of Natira, the son-in-law of Pinehas ben Yosef, as "the father of Sahl and Ishâq," is of great interest. For this expression is intelligible only if at the time of the report Natira senior was dead, and was therefore better described as the father of the well-known brothers Sahl and Ishâq then flourishing. This is in perfect agreement both with the fact that in his report on Saadia (Neubauer, 80,6, below) R. Nathan speaks of the *sons* of Natira, who continued the anti-Exilarchic policy of their father, and with the statements in Harkavy's fragment, according to which Natira senior must have died 916 (see p. 749, n. 2). As it is stated in the beginning of the report that R. Nathan had witnessed only in part the events related by him, it is most natural to assume that he was only a contemporary of Natira's sons, and an eye-witness of the struggle between Saadia and the Exilarch, while in his account of Kohen Zedeq he relied on what "he had been partly told." L. 13. The additional word שָׁחֹר, "several months," is not without importance in fixing precisely the chronology of the events reported there (cf. Grätz³, V, p. 393). It implies that 'Uqba had lived in Karmîsîn some time before he happened to meet the Sultan. L. 17. Instead of the indefinite מֶלֶךְ the Arabic has "Kisra," and mentions also the name of his concubine, both in perfect agreement with the Arabic sources (see p. 757, n. 10, and p. 758, n. 1). Verso : L. 6. According to the Arabic 'Uqba was prohibited from entering only the city of Bagdad. It seems to be

exact knowledge of the whereabouts of the Natira family. It would be quite strange that at the same time there should have existed two different men writing on Bagdad, on the same period and the same circle, almost in the same style and manner. I think it is rather probable that both fragments belong to one book bearing on the "history of Bagdad" (see p. 753). As the number of words on a page of both fragments is almost the same (the number of lines on a page is not indicated by Harkavy), I should not wonder if it were not the same MS. The only difficulty is that the date suggested by the Natira fragment (about 930, see Harkavy, l. c., p. 35) differs from that implied by ours (about 945). But perhaps there is some mistake in the numbers.

a misunderstanding on the part of an editor, who mistook בבל for Babylonia (see p. 752 and p. 759, n. 4). L. 8. The Arabic has three or four years, instead of the four or five years of the Hebrew (79, 14). L. 9. The Arabic confirms the reading of the edition בן דוד (instead of דוד in the MS.), and shows also more exactly the degree of their relationship: their fathers were brothers. L. 10. According to the original one of the chief motives of Kohen Zedeq in refusing to recognize the new Exilarch was his ambition and his dread of David ben Zakkai's interference.

In spite of the fact that some of the events reported by R. Nathan Hababli go back to oral information, his trustworthiness and exactitude can hardly be overestimated. He is thoroughly familiar with the things he reports about. He knows them down to their minute details. Even where he has to rely on oral reports his exactitude is admirable. This impression made upon us by the Hebrew version is strengthened still more by the Arabic original. As said above, he knows the sons of Natira by name, and mentions them in the order of age. He states exactly the geographical position of the places he is speaking of. He knows for whom the statues near Karmîsîn were erected, and also gives an exact description of them. It has not yet been noticed that his report about the figures is confirmed by the Arabic sources in almost every detail¹. These circumstances are of great importance, for they are apt to confirm still more our confidence in him, and give him the advantage over the younger authority Sherira where he is in contradiction with him.

It has already been mentioned that the beginning of the fragment is most unfortunately torn off. On the right-hand corner, however, we can still discern the words הא אלשיך אבו אסחק בן. But the handwriting is different from that of the MS., the ink likewise, and I do not think that this mutilated superscription can claim great

¹ See the notes to the translation.

authority. At any rate, it is obvious that the fragment began here, the lines on this page beginning a little lower down than on the next one. It has been convincingly maintained by Isaac Halevy (*Doroth Harishonim*, III, 2, p. 75 f.) that the paragraph on the "prerogatives of Sura, as compared with Pumbadita" (Neubauer, 77 f.), preceding the account on 'Uqba, does not belong to the report of R. Nathan Hababli, which is introduced by the words **וַאֲשֶׁר אָמַר ר' נָתָן הַבָּהֵן**. This view is strongly supported by our manuscript, for otherwise it would be a strange coincidence that R. Nathan's report in our MS. begins on a new page, and in a way distinctly marking a new paragraph which introduces the report of R. Nathan. On the other hand, it may easily be seen that the language, which is an excellent Hebrew and highly characteristic, is the same in both. Besides the general congruence in style, cf. expressions like p. 77 penultima **דַּעַתָּם עַד שֶׁהִסְכִּימָה** and 83, 6 **עַד שֶׁנִּפְלָה** and 78, 23 **נִפְלָה קִטְמָה בִּינֵיהֶם** 78, 18 **הִסְכִּימָה דַּעַת הֶקְהָל** and 82, 7 **פְּשָׁרָה** and 78, 19 **וַעֲשׂוּ פְּשָׁרָה בִּינֵיהֶם** 78, 19 **קִטְמָה בִּינֵיהֶם**. We have, therefore, to assume that the two pieces were worked out and put together by a compiler. The hand of a compiler can also be seen in the introductory remarks **וַאֲשֶׁר אָמַר ר' נָתָן הַבָּהֵן** 78, 20, 83, 5, 86, 13. As to the question whether this compiler was at the same time the translator of our text, it can scarcely be inferred with any certainty. The fact that the Arabic **وَأَمَّا وَرَبَّلَ بَغْدَادَ** (verso, 6) is rendered in the Hebrew by **שֶׁלָּא יִכְנַס בְּכָל מַלְכוּת בָּבֶל** rather points to an editor who mistook **בָּבֶל** for Babylonia and added the words **מַלְכוּת בָּבֶל**. Perhaps the conjecture may be allowed that somebody who was writing on the history of the academies compiled different sources¹, one of them being R. Nathan of Bagdad, who had written on the history of Bagdad (see p. 749, n. 2).

¹ The piece on the prerogatives of Sura to be found in the **יוֹסֵפִין הַשֵּׁלֶם**, as quoted from the **מִכְרֵא דְהַלְמוֹד** of Samuel Hanagid, differs too greatly from Neubauer, 78, 3 ff., to be a quotation from it, or vice versa. Both probably go back to a common source.

The question whether the report of R. Nathan was put down by him in writing, or, as Halberstamm (*Yeshurun*, V, p. קלח note) maintains, was transmitted by him orally, can hardly be decided. Judging from the expression כמו שכתבנו למעלה (86, 5) or כמו שכתבנו (87, 1) we would rather be inclined to assume the former. I have the impression—it cannot claim to be more than an impression—that the words אַכְבָּאָר בְּגַדָּאָד (recto, 1) “the history of Bagdad” represent the title of the book of R. Nathan, to which, if my conjecture (p. 749, n. 2) be correct, belonged also the fragment on the Natira family¹.

The Arabic original suggests many a new question in connexion with the extremely complicated problem of R. Nathan Hababli. But these I have to leave to historians proper.

TEXT².

Recto.

ק³ מן אַכְבָּאָר בְּגַדָּאָד מִמָּא חֲדָתָּ בַּעֲצָה
 [ראם אלנ] לות עוקבה אלראוודי אלדי כאן וצל אלי אפריקיא
⁴ [אלרי] אסה סנין כתירה לם יקף עלי כמיתהא וולי כהן צדק בן יוסף ישיבה
 בפמבדיתא וחי אלאנבאר פי אִיאִמָּה מַחֵל דִּ סְנִין אֵלִי אֵן וקע בינהמא
 5 אַכְחֵלָאָף וּשְׂרֹר עֲלֵי זָכָר כְּרִאָסָאָן וּדְלָךְ אֵן רִשּׁוֹת כְּרִאָסָאָן פִּי אֶלְקִידִים
 לַפְּמַבְדִּיתָא וּמֵן עֲנֵדָהּ יִכְרֵנָּ אֵלִיהָּ דִּיִּין וְנָמִיעַ קְבֵאלָהּ אִמּוּאֵלָהּ אֵלִי
 פִּמְבְּדִיתָא חֲצֵל פֶּאֲרָאָד עֻקְבָּא יִכְרֵנָּ אֵלִיהָּ דִּיִּין מֵן קְבֵלָהּ לִימְלַכְהָּ
 וִיסְתַּאֲתֵר בִּאִמּוּאֵלָהּ לִנְפִסָּהּ דִּין פִּמְבְּדִיתָא פֶּרֶאֱפֵעַ פִּי דְלָךְ כֵּהָן
 צִדְקָא רֵאשׁ יִשִּׁיבַת פִּמְבְּדִיתָא וְכֵאֵן מֵן אֲנַצָּר כֵּהָן צִדְקָא עֲלֵיהּ יוֹסֵף
 10 בֵּן פִּינְחָס וְכִתְנָה זֶזֶן אֲבִנְתָּהּ נְטִירָא אֲבוּ סָהֵל וְאַסְחָאָק מַעַ בַּעֲץ

¹ Harkavy in a note to the Hebrew translation of Grätz (III, 291, n. 82) mentions an Arabic fragment bearing on the struggle of Saadia with David ben Zakkai. It would be of great interest to know the relation of this fragment to the report of R. Nathan Hababli.

² The MS. has no vowels at all, and very rarely diacritical points.

³ The letter before the ק is perhaps ט. A remnant of אַסְחָאָק?

⁴ There is space for one short word, perhaps וּלִי.

⁵ Sic.

וְנוֹה אֲלֵבֶלֶד אֱלִי אֵן נִפִי עֻקְבָּא אֱלִי מוֹצֵעַ יִסְמָא קֶרְמִיסִין כֹּלָף בְּגִדָא
 בָּהּ אִיאִם פִּי שְׂרִיקִיָּה מִמָּא יִלִּי טְרִיק כְּרֵאסָאן וְכָאן עִמְרָם בֶּן שְׁלֵמָה
 [ר] אִשׁ יִשִּׁיבֵת סוּרָא פֶּאקָאם עֻקְבָּא בְּקֶרְמִיסִין שְׁהוּר אֱלִי אֵן כְּרֵג אֵל
 [ס] לִטָּאן מִן בְּגִדָאד מִתְנַזָּהָא אֱלִי קֶרְמִיסִין וְדִלְךְ אֵן פִּיהָא אֲתָאֵר אֱלִי אֵל

15 . . . ¹ חִיל וְאִמִּיא וְתִמְאָר וְנִמִּיעַ זַעֲפִרָאן בְּגִדָאד מִנְהָא יֵאֲתִי כֹאֲרֵנָהָא
 [א] לִי נִצֵּף מִיל מוֹצֵעַ יִסְמָא שְׂפִרָאן לָהּ מִנְלִם מַעֲלָק קֶדֶר קֶאֱמִתִּין מִנְקוּב
² [אֵל] צִפָּה פִּיהָ צוּרָה כִּסְרָא וְצוּרָה סִירִין גִּאֲרִיתָהּ וּמִן אִסְפֵּלָהּ פִּי וְטָא
 [צו] רָה פֶּרֶם מִנְקוּב אִיצָא וְהוּ כָּאוּי וִיכְרֵג מִן אֲלֵגְבֵּל מָא יֵד ל מִן פֶּאָה
 וִיכְרֵג מִן דִּנְבָה ³ פִּכָּאן אֲלִסְלִטָּאן יִרְכֵּב אֱלִי אֲלִמּוֹצֵעַ פִּי כָל יוֹם פֶּאֲכֹד
 20 נִפְסָה עֻקְבָּא בֶּאֱלֻקוֹף אֲמִמָּה וְאֲלִרְעָא לָהּ פֶּאֲלֵל דְּעוּהָ דְּעָא לָהּ
 אִסְתִּטְרָפָהָא כֹּאֲתֵב אֲלִסְלִטָּאן פּוֹמָהָא עֵנֶד נִפְסָה פֶּאֲד כָּאן בֶּאֱלֹגֵד דְּעָא
 אִיצָא [בֶּר] עָא לֹא יִשְׁבָּה אֲלֹאִיל פּוֹן[ם] דִּלְךְ אֲלִכֹּאֲתֵב פֶּאֲקָאם עֲלִי הוּא
⁴ [סָנָה כֹּאֲמֵלָה] וְהוּ פִּי כָל יוֹם יִדְעוּ בִּרְעוּא לֹא תִשְׁבָּה גִירָהָא וְאֵל
 5 זֶם גִּי[מִיע] הָא פִּכְעֵד סָנָה דִּכְרֵר אֲלִכֹּאֲתֵב כְּבֵרָה לִלְסִלְטָאן וְאִנְהָ

Verso.

[ל]ם יִכְרֵר דְּעוּא טוֹל אֲלִסְנָה פֶּטָא[לְבָה]
 פִּנְטֵרָה אֲלִסְלִטָּאן וְתִאֲמָל מִן אֲלִפֹּאֲטָה
 בֶּאֲדִכָּאֵלָה עֲלִי נִפְסָה ו . נוה ⁶ . כִּמְנָ ⁷
 פִּסְגָּל לָהּ בְּדִלְךְ וְרִנֵּעַ פֶּעֲטָם דִּלְךְ עֲלִי נִטִּירָא
 5 עֵמֶל פִּי נִפְיָה פֶּלֶם יוֹלוּ ⁸ יִלְטָפוּ אֱלִי אֵן נְפִי תִאֲנִיָּה וְעֻקְרֵת עֲלִיָּה
 בֶּאֲשִׁהָאֵר אֲלֵא יִדְכֵּל בְּגִדָאד אֲבֹאֵא וְאֵן דִּכְלָהָא פֶּאֲלִאסְלֹאִם אֲחֻקְּ בָּהּ
 פֶּלֶם יִחְמֵלָה בל[ד] מִן בִּלְדָּאן אֲלִשְׂרָק פֶּאֲכֹד עֲלִי נִפְסָה וְכֵרֵג אֱלִי אֲלִמְגֵרֵב

¹ h is doubtful. Two letters may have preceded.

² The whole word is quite doubtful.

³ Space in the MS.

⁴ Slight traces of letters justifying our reading.

⁵ Sic. The place on the line is torn off.

⁶ We would expect וְנוה, but the n is impossible. The ו might also be a ז.

⁷ One letter missing at the beginning of the word. Might be מ or י.

⁸ Sic.

⁹ Slight traces of י and ק are still discernible. Not impossible אֲלִעֻקֵּד.

¹ פאקאמת אלריאסה מעפלה מחל ג סנין או ד אלי אן עטם דלך
 עלי אלמסה פכאטבו דויד בן זכיי והו בן עם עקבה ליקדמוה וכאן
 10 כהן צדק לא יחב ת[ק]דמתה שח עלי אלריאסה וכוף מן פעל עקבה
 פקדמוה מתיבה סורא בבגדאד וכתב אלי סורא אלי בני בירב ואל
 תלמידים בולך ואמרהם אן יבארכוה ויעקרו ריאסתה פנולו²
 בנו³ בירב ואלתנאין מע זמיע אלחלמידים מן סורא אלי מוצע
 יקאל לה אלקצ[ר] מדינה שריפה פי קבלה בגראד בינהא ובין
 15 סורא סתה אמיאל והי בלד דויד בן זכיי ומנהא אצלה פבאר[כוה]
 ועקרו ריאסתה¹ ופי זמיע דלך ידאפע כהן צדק ריאסתה ו[לא]
 יניבה אלי שי מנהא אקאם⁴ דלך נחו ג סנין וכאן ניסי ראש כלה [אלמערופ]⁵
 באלנהרואני בציר יכתלף בינהם ליצלח דאת אלבין טול הזה [אלנ]⁶
 סנין אלי אן מצי אלל⁷ אליה לילה וכאן יפתח כל קפל בכלאם מ. .⁸
 20 פפתח חלך אללילה יד קפל כאנת מקפלה עלי דרוב ובעצהא [עלי]⁹
 אבואב כהן צדק אלי אן וקף עליה אצאבה ידרם נצף אלליל¹⁰
 פאסתרובה כהן צדק ועטם עליה מנ[י]ה וסבב דכולה אליה
 פק⁷ לה יארלאם אלמתיבה מא פתחת אלא יד קפל אלי אן וצלת אליך
 פקאל לה ואיש ארדת בהרא ק⁷ לה ארגב אליך אן תבארך ראם
 25 אלגלות ותעקד לה פאנאבה אלי דלך וחקק רגאה ולא יכיבה

TRANSLATION¹¹.

| ... of the history of Bagdad of what he had been partly told Recto, 1
 | ... the Exilarch 'Uqba of Davidic origin came to Northern Africa. 2

¹ Space in the MS.² The ם extended below the line.³ Possibly בני.⁴ Sic. Read עלי אקאם.⁵ Supplied from the Hebrew נודע. Possibly also אלמערור.⁶ Still visible. Supplied from the context.⁷ Sic.⁸ מ not quite certain. There is still place for two letters. Perhaps מכה.
See p. 760, n. 9.⁹ A very slight trace of a letter which might indicate an ן. Probably נלי which fits in exactly.¹⁰ A stroke at the end of the line in the MS., and a space at the beginning of the next line.¹¹ Prof. Theodor Nöldeke, with the kindness so characteristic of him, read the proof of this article and added a few explanatory notes. These are included in brackets and marked at the end by N.

3 | [He had occupied ?]¹ the supremacy for many years, the number of which he (R. Nathan) could not make out. Kohen Zedeq ben
 4 Yosef² had been in charge of the academy | in Pumbadita (i. e.
 5 Anbar)³ in his ('Uqba's) days for about four⁴ years, when | a difference of opinion and quarrels⁵ broke out between them, on account of the jurisdiction of Khorasan. For the jurisdiction of Khorasan
 6 had in olden times belonged | to Pumbadita, whence *the dayyānim used to be sent thither⁶, and all the tax⁷ on her revenues used to go
 7 to | Pumbadita. 'Uqba, however, wished *the dayyānim to be sent
 8 to her (Khorasan) by himself, in order to take possession of her | and⁸ get hold of her revenues for himself alone *to the exclusion of
 9 Pumbadita⁸. But Kohen | Zedeq, the head of the academy of Pumbadita, protested against it. Among those who assisted Kohen
 10 Zedeq * against him ('Uqba)⁸ were Yosef | ben Pinehas and his son-in-law * the husband of his daughter⁸ Natira, * the father of Sahl
 11 and Ishāq⁹, together with some of | the most prominent men of the land. At last 'Uqba was banished to a place called Karmisîn beyond
 12 Bagdad | about five days' journey to the East, * on the way leading
 13 to Khorasan¹⁰, while Amram ben Shelomoh | was the head of the academy of Sura. 'Uqba had been in Karmisîn * for several months¹¹
 14 when the | Sultan left Bagdad¹² to take a pleasure trip to Karmisîn,

¹ See p. 753, n. 4.

² The Hebrew has erroneously רב יוסף or רב יוסף.

³ אלנבר is missing in the Hebrew. The identity of Pumbadita and Anbar is confirmed by the itinerary of Benjamin of Tudela where אלנבר (ed. Asher, II, 69) and אלינבר (p. 53, *J. Q. R.*, XVII, 292, אלינבר) are to be read אלינבר. [I notice that Grätz³, V, 389, n. 1, has already this correction.] In accordance with this the conjecture of de Goeje, *Z. D. M. G.*, 39, 10, that Pumbadita (on account of the reading אלינבר) is identical with الجبة is out of the question. On the position of Pumbadita cf. Berliner, *Beiträge zur Geographie und Ethnographie Babylonien*, p. 57, and de Goeje, loc. cit., p. 10 ff.

⁴ The Hebrew מ' שנה. Perhaps the translator misread ארבע for ארבעין. See Introduction, p. 749.

⁵ שרר, pl. شرور querelle (Dozy).

⁶ Missing in the Hebrew. Literally: from it (Pumbadita) a dayyān would go out to her (Khorasan).

⁷ قباله tax. Cf. the explanation in Dozy.

⁸ Missing in the Hebrew.

⁹ Missing in the Hebrew. See Introduction, p. 749 f.

¹⁰ Missing in the Hebrew.

¹¹ Missing in the Hebrew. See Introduction, p. 750.

¹² The Hebrew only המלך. The reading of the edition מלך בבל shows that the editor no longer knew that בבל was Bagdad. See p. 752.

because there were old monuments¹ . . . | . . .² and springs³ and 15 trees, and all the saffron of Bagdad used to come from there. Outside of it (Karmîsîn)⁴, | (at a distance of) nearly half a mile⁵, 16 there was a place called Shafaran⁶, which had a hanging⁷ hall of two men's height in excavated⁸ form⁹, | containing the statue of Kisra¹⁰ 17

¹ Arabic آثار. In the same way Ibn Rustah (tenth century, ed. de Goeje, p. 270) in mentioning this place says وبهذا الموضع آثار للملك الفرس كثيرة. The rest of the line has אלי אלי "to the." But the following word is destroyed.

² See p. 754, n. 1.

³ "Springs," literally "waters." For a similar description of Karmîsîn cf. Ibn Ḥauqal (wrote 977, ed. de Goeje, p. 256), وهي مدينة لطيفة فيها مياه جارئة وشجر وثمر.

⁴ The hall, as well as the figures of Khosrau, Shirin, and the horse described in the following lines, are often mentioned by Arabic writers: Yāqūt, III, 250 ff; IV, 69 f., 112. Mas'ūdi (died 956), Murūğ ad-Dahab, II, 215, Ibn Ḥauqal, l. l., Muqaddasi (wrote 985), ed. de Goeje, p. 339, Ibn Rustah, l. l., pp. 166 and 270. For particulars see the following notes. The Hebrew has here more the character of a paraphrase.

⁵ Yāqūt, III, 250, has one parasang, Ibn Rustah, p. 166, three, Ibn Ḥauqal, l. l., eight parasangs. There seems to be some contradiction. I am not in a position to state the exact relation between a mile and a parasang at that time. According to the Talmud a parasang was equal to four miles. Cf. Kohut, *Aruch Completum*, s. v. פרסא. [This is also the usual way of counting in Arabic. N.]

⁶ The vocalization is not certain. I did not find any references to this place in the Arabic sources. Instead of that we very often find the name "qasr Shirin," "the castle of Shirin" (Yāqūt has a special article on it, IV, 112), which the Persian king built for Shirin, and where she used to spend the summer, Ibn Rustah, 270.

⁷ عَلَّقَى الْبِنَاءَ "he made the building . . . pensile, i. e. supported above the ground by pillars . . . Hence they say نَقَبُوا الْحَائِطَ وَعَلَّقُوهُ, they dug beneath the wall . . . and . . . rendered it مَعْلَقَى, i. e. pensile" (Lane). See also Dozy. The hall seems to have been arch-like, since Ibn Rustah (p. 166) and Yāqūt (III, 250; IV, 69) call it a ṭāq, "an arch-like building." Cf. the following note.

⁸ Arabic מִקְוֶה, cf. the foregoing note. I am not clear about the exact meaning of this architectural terminus technicus. I think it means excavated (in the rock), and is identical with Ibn Rustah's statement (p. 166) that it was הַטָּק מִן הַסֶּלֶסֶל, "an arch-like building hewn out of the rock." As מִקְוֶה occurs a second time in line 18, I do not believe that the correction מִקְוֶה would be justified.

⁹ This word is doubtful. See p. 754, n. 2.

¹⁰ The king alluded to is the Sassanide Khosrau II Parwēz, "the

and the statue of Širīn, his concubine¹, and under him (the king)²
 18 on the ground³ | the statue of a horse⁴, also excavated⁵ and hollow,
 the water which came from the mountain entering through its
 19 mouth | and flowing out through its tail⁶. And the Sultan used to
 20 ride to this place every day on horseback. Then 'Uqba made up | his
 mind to place himself before him and to salute him. The first
 21 salutation he addressed to him | was considered elegant by the
 secretary of the Sultan, and he wrote it down for himself. On the
 22 following day he delivered | another salutation, which did not re-
 semble the preceding. The secretary of the Sultan wrote down this
 23 (salutation) too. In this way he went on | [for a whole year],
 delivering every day a salutation which did not resemble the others,
 24 and the secretary | writing down a[ll of] them. After the lapse of
 Verso, 1 a year the secretary told his story to the Sultan, and that he | had
 not duplicated any salutation during the year, and he asked him . . .

victorious" (in Arabic, "Abarwēz," see the writers mentioned above),
 reigned 590-627 p. C. (Nöldeke, *Aufsätze zur persischen Geschichte*, p. 124).

¹ The pronunciation of the name is usually given as Širīn with a ش, but the codex of Ibn Rustah (p. 270) always has Sirin. This seems to have been the pronunciation in Bagdad. Širīn being a Persian word (meaning "sweet"), there is the same difference in pronunciation as that between the usual Karmisīn and Karmāshin (= Karmānšāh), Ibn Rustah, p. 166. Širīn was famous for her beauty (cf. also Mas'ūdi, II, 232), and, though a Christian (Nöldeke, *Aufsätze zur persischen Geschichte*, p. 125), she was the favourite concubine of Khosrau.

² Since we know from Ibn Rustah that the hall was very high, a staircase of 250 steps hewn in the rock leading from the bottom to the top (من أسفل الطاق الى أعلاه), it would be more natural to translate "and at the bottom of it (the hall)." But on the other hand, we know that Khosrau was represented riding on his horse (Yāqūt, III, 250, 252, Ibn Hāuqal, I. I., Mas'ūdi, II, 215), and R. Nathan has hardly left out this detail.

³ I am not certain about this translation. It might also mean on a pedestal or substructure. Besides, it would be natural to expect ٢ instead of ٣.

⁴ The name of this famous horse was Shabdāz or (pronounced with the imāla) Shabdéz (see the above-mentioned sources. Yāqūt has a long article on it, quoting several poems in its praise, III, 250 ff.).

⁵ See p. 757, n. 8.

⁶ In this detail R. Nathan differs from Yāqūt (III, 250) and Ibn Rustah, who maintain that the water came from the figure of a man, standing on a side (Ibn Rustah). According to Mas'ūdi (p. 215), Ibn Rustah, and Yāqūt, there was a large number of different figures in the hall, of birds (Ibn Rustah), of men, women, footmen, and horsemen (Yāqūt, III, 250).

| and the Sultan looked at him and considered his words . . . | and he 2, 3
 granted him this¹, and he returned. This, however, was a heavy
 (blow) for Natira . . . | effort to banish him, and did not stop intriguing² 4, 5
 until he was banished a second time and [decrees ?] were issued |
 publicly³ against him that he might never enter Bagdad⁴, and in case 6
 he entered it, Islam should be more appropriate for him⁵. | But 7
 no city of the cities⁶ of the East could offer him a foothold, and he
 made up his mind to emigrate to Maghreb⁷. | And the supremacy 8
 remained unoccupied for about three or four⁸ years, until it became
 hard | for the nation, and they spoke to David ben Zakkai, who was 9
 the cousin of 'Uqba on their father's side, in order to appoint him.
 But | Kohen Zedeq did not like his appointment, * being jealous of 10
 his supremacy, and being afraid on account of what had been done
 to 'Uqba⁹. | So the academy of Sura appointed him * in Bagdad¹⁰. 11

¹ سَجَّل used of a king, "qui accorde quelque chose dans un diplôme." Dozy.

² لطف I, "employer des moyens subtils, p. e. la ruse, la flatterie." Dozy.

³ شهر IV, "publier, promulguer, faire proclamer par un écrier public." Dozy. It seems that the reading of the edition מַעַם הָאָרֶץ (instead of מֵאֵם הָאָרֶץ of the MS.) has something to do with the Arabic بَاهِشَار.

⁴ Here there is a serious difference between the Arabic and the Hebrew, according to which he was banished from the whole kingdom. Since it is impossible that the translator should have mistaken בְּנִיָּא in this way, it is to be assumed that the misunderstanding goes back to the Editor. See pp. 750 f. and 752. The MS. adds also 79, וְכָל מְלִכָּוָה 12 which is not to be found in the Arabic. [בְּנִיָּא perhaps misread for בָּנִי.]

⁵ The Hebrew has יִרְדּוּ לִי רִנְיָו. I am not quite certain as to the meaning of the Arabic phrase. Perhaps it means that he would be forced to accept Islam. [I know of nothing better though it looks very strange. The Hebrew translator has certainly taken offence at the expression. The excommunicated person is probably forthwith handed over to Satan. N.]

⁶ The plural بُلْدَان has usually the meaning of "cities" (see Freytag and Lane), and this translation is more in accordance with the statement that he was excluded only from Bagdad. The translator who has אֶרֶץ מִלְכָּה מִכָּל אֲרָצוֹת misunderstood בְּלָד. Cf. also p. 748 f.

⁷ At that time in the hands of the Fatimides who were entirely independent of the Eastern Califat. [The Arabs of Irāq, however, just as the Jews of Babylonia in earlier times, consider Syria and Palestine a part of Maghreb. N.]

⁸ The Hebrew has four or five.

⁹ The Hebrew has only לִפְנֵי שְׂדֵי קְרִיבָה שֶׁל עֻקְבָּא.

¹⁰ Missing in the Hebrew.

Thereupon he wrote¹ to Sura, to the ordained scholars and to the |
 12 students regarding this matter, and commanding them to bless him
 13 and to acknowledge his supremacy. And | the ordained scholars and
 the "tannâim"², together with all the students, went down from
 14 Sura to a place | by the name of al-Ḳaṣr³, a beautiful town to the
 15 south of Bagdad, there being between itself and | Sura six⁴ miles, this
 (al-Ḳaṣr) being the town of David ben Zakkai and (the place of) his
 16 origin⁵. Then they blesse[d him] | and acknowledged his supremacy.
 Despite all this Kohen Zedeq contested his supremacy, and [did not] |
 17 grant him the least thing thereof, remaining in this attitude for
 about three years. And Nissi⁶, the head of the "Kalla" assembly,
 18 [known] | as the Nahrawânite⁷, was blind⁸, and he used to mediate
 between them in order to settle the quarrel during those [three] |
 19 years, until he once came to him in the night. He used to open
 20 every lock by a word [of his?]⁹ | and he had opened that night

¹ Grammatically "he wrote" can refer only to David ben Zakkai. But the Hebrew is more logical in referring it to the head of the Academy of Sura, and reading רִאשׁ יְשִׁיבָה סוּרָא.

² On the "Tannâim" at the time of the Geonim, cf. Lewy, *Über einige Fragmente aus der Mischna des Abba Saul*, p. 9, n. 12.

³ There were quite a number of places bearing this name (= castle). [Ours is undoubtedly qasr Abi Hubaira, which is often called al-qasr and lay in the near vicinity of Sura, see Yâqût, 4, 123, 17. N.]

⁴ The Hebrew edition has seven, the MS. ten miles.

⁵ The Hebrew has אֶרֶץ מוֹלָדוֹ, the Biblical expression probably suggested by the word בֵּלָא. See p. 748.

⁶ The Hebrew edition has נָסִיחַ, the MS. נִסִּי. Since later on (79 penultima) both the edition and the MS. (the latter according to the information of Dr. Marx) have נִסִּי, it is to be assumed that the editor took נִסִּי נִרְדֵּעַ to mean "known by miracles," regarding the fact related in the succeeding lines as a miracle. See note 9 on this page. On the name נִסִּי comp. Harkavy, *Zikhron larishonim*, V, p. קסז.

⁷ From Nahrawâne, half a day's journey to the east of Bagdad (Neubauer, 85, 17).

⁸ I found nowhere the euphemistic use of בְּצִיר.

⁹ See p. 755, n. 8. The Hebrew has בָּלַ בְּשֵׁם (MS. מִנְעוּלִי) וְהָיָה פֶּתַח כָּל מִנְעוּלֵי (מִנְעוּלִי) which can mean only: he used to open all the locks in Babylon with the Shem (Hamephorash). This strange translation suggesting the wonder-working character of the man may have been caused by a misunderstanding, the translator probably having misread בְּלִיָּאָה instead of בְּלִיָּאָה. The meaning is not quite clear to me, on account of the missing word. Perhaps he wants to say that being blind, and having special difficulty in opening doors, Nissi only had to call his name to have other people open them for him. At any rate, the original does not suggest anything miraculous. [To me it seems that the author refers to a miracle

fourteen¹ locks closing gates, some of them [on] | the doors of 21
 Kohen Zedeq, until he stood before him and found him studying in the
 middle of the night. | And Kohen Zedeq was frightened by him and 22
 strongly impressed by his coming and the reason of his visiting him. |
 And he said unto him, O head of the Academy! I unfastened no 23
 less than fourteen¹ locks before I reached thee. | And he said unto 24
 him: What dost thou mean thereby? He said unto him: I beseech
 thee to bless the Exilarch and acknowledge him. And he conceded
 this to him, and he confirmed his hope and did not disappoint him.

I. FRIEDLAENDER.

which at bottom has been caused by some misunderstanding. "To open
 all doors" probably meant "to overcome all obstacles." N.]

¹ The edition has fourteen, the MS. four.